

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DOHA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0552

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

C O N F I D E N T I A L DOHA 0691

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR QA KU MU TC BA

SUBJ: AMIR OF QATAR ON GULF AFFAIRS AND REGIONAL SECURITY

REF: DOHA 0688

SUMMARY: AMIR OF QATAR SUPPORTS GULF UNITY IF IT CAREFULLY PLANNED AND GRADUALLY REACHED. RE REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION, HE SEES SAUDI ARABIA, IRAN, AND POSSIBLY IRAQ, AS PRINCIPAL PLAYERS, AND BELIEVES COOPERATION NEED NOT RPT NOT TAKE FORM OF FORMAL PACT. RE US SECURITY ROLE IN AREA, AMIR BELIEVES US PRESENCE DESIRABLE AND WOULD BE ASSURED IF WE SUCCESSFULLY CATALYZE MID EAST SETTLEMENT. AMIR AVOIDED DEFINITE ANSWER TO QUESTION RE HIS ATTITUDE ON US NAVAL PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN. END SUMMARY

1. DURING JUNE 12 CONVERSATION, I ASKED AMIR OF QATAR, SHAYKH KHALIFA BIN HAMAD AL THANI, FOR HIS VIEWS ON CURRENT REPORTED
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MOVES TOWARDS GULF UNITY AND REGIONAL SECURITY.

2. AMIR RESPONDED THAT HIS CONCEPT OF GULF UNITY IS ONE THAT WOULD EVOLVE FROM THE ECONOMIC TO THE POLITICAL. IN THIS CONTEXT, HE MENTIONED HIS RECENT PROPOSAL FOR A GULF COMMON MARKET (REFTEL). HE STRESSED THAT ANY MEETINGS CALLED TO DISCUSS SUCH IMPORTANT TOPICS MUST BE CAREFULLY PREPARED TO ASSURE THEIR SUCCESS. IT WOULD NOT DO, HE SAID, FOR AREA STATES TO CONVENE FOR A SESSION OF HIGH FLOWN RHETORIC THAT WOULD LEAD TO NOTHING BUT DISAPPOINTMENT.

3. ON REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION, AMIR SAID THAT NEED FOR CONSULTATIONS OBVIOUS BUT THAT ACTUAL COORDINATION AGAIN SHOULD BE GRADUAL AND WELL PREPARED PROCESS. ACCORDING KHALIFA, SECURITY COORDINATION NEED NOT RPT NOT TAKE FORM OF FORMAL PACT; IN ANY CASE, REQUIREMENTS AND MODALITIES WOULD HAVE TO BE PAINSTAKINGLY WORKED OUT. RE IRAN, AMIR SAID ONE HAD TO BE PRACTICAL: IRAN IS THERE, IT IS STRONG AND IT IS ANTI-COMMUNIST, AND IT MUST PLAY MAJOR SECURITY ROLE IN AREA, PARTICULARLY IN VITAL HORMUZ STRAITS. KHALIFA CONTINUED THAT HE SAW SAUDIS AND IRAQ AS OTHER MAJOR PLAYERS; SAUDI ROLE OBVIOUS, AND HE HOPEFUL THAT IRAQ UNDER SADDAM HUSSAIN WOULD ALSO PLAY MODERATE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE. HE SAID IRAN/IRAQ AGREEMENT GOOD BEGINNING, BUT NOTED THAT TERRITORIAL DISPUTES BETWEEN IRAQ AND SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAQ AND KUWAIT WERE STILL UNRESOLVED. ACCORDING AMIR, IRAQ WOULD BEAR CONTINUED WATCHING.

4. I ASKED KHALIFA HOW HE VIEWED THE US ROLE IN GULF SECURITY. I NOTED THERE HAD BEEN PERSISTENT TALK THAT GULF SHOULD BE "FREE" OF GREAT POWER PRESENCE, AND IN THIS CONTEXT ASKED ABOUT HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD US NAVAL PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN. AMIR REMARKED THAT IRANIAN PRINCE HOVEYDA HAD MADE SPEECH ON THIS SUBJECT, HE THOUGHT ON JUNE 11. ACCORDING AMIR'S UNDERSTANDING OF SPEECH, IT PROVIDED FOR "INDIRECT" US PRESENCE IN GULF. (WE HAVE SEEN NO REPORT OF HOVEYDA SPEECH.) AMIR HIMSELF SAID EVOLUTION OF GULF SITUATION WOULD DETERMINE WHAT FORM US PRESENCE SHOULD TAKE. HE SAID US PRESENCE DESIRABLE AND WANTED, BUT NEED NOT TAKE FORM OF A "BASE". IN ANY EVENT, KHALIFA SAID, IF US SOLVED MID EAST CRISIS ITS PRESENCE IN AREA WOULD BE ASSURED NOT ONLY IN SECURITY ASPECT BUT IN ALL ASPECTS.

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5. COMMENT: AMIR IS OBVIOUSLY VERY CAUTIOUS IN ASSESSING PROSPECTS OF MOVES TOWARD UNITY AND SECURITY COOPERATION IN GULF. AMIR AVOIDED MY PERSISTENT EFFORTS TO GET A CLEAR ANSWER FROM HIM ON US NAVAL PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN. HE IS, OF COURSE, AWARE OF NOISES IN THE REGION ABOUT GULF "FREE" OF GREAT POWER PRESENCE, AND THAT SUCH NOISES REPORTEDLY EMANATING BOTH FROM IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA. UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES, IT UNDERSTANDABLE THAT HE DODGING A DIRECT ANSWER.

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